

INTRODUCTION

The choice of antisemitism¹ for this issue of *Dysophia* is motivated by the regular explosion of argumentative debates on various activist email lists. Few topics seem to generate as much heated discussion and my hope is that a deeper, more nuanced exploration of the subject will help inform the various debates, specifically from an anarchist perspective.

Two stand out for me: the viciousness of the discussions around Gilad Atzmon on UK Indymedia and the debate around hosting Boycott, Divestment & Sanction lists on Aktivix.org. These show the practical need to dig deeper.

For me, a key question is why, given the very nature of anarchist politics, are anarchists struggling with this issue in the first place? The straightforward answer is that we have simplified our politics too much², that we have assumed that being anarchist is sufficient to be against all forms of discrimination, including antisemitism – an assumption that applies across much of our politics.

This simplification is not only disruptive in fanning arguments, but is dangerous in that it ignores the subtler ways that liberal politics infect anarchism. If something is not actively challenged by a thought-out anarchist critique, then that vacuum is filled by the hegemonic ideology of the moment; we are drawn back into politics we have supposedly rejected, that of liberal democracy, and so on.

Only by moving away from simplified positions can we build an anarchist movement that takes resisting modern antisemitism seriously. At the same time we can confront other flaws in current anarchist praxis, such as how we use our politics to interact with the wider world, national liberation struggles, our own poorly analysed anti-racist struggles and so on.

Antisemitism has moved on, yet for the most part our thinking and rhetoric remain stuck in the anti-fascist struggles of 50 to 100 years ago. Too often we rely on images and ideas that fail to reflect the current situation. There are new challenges to be faced and subtler manifestations to be acknowledged. The constant flicker of antisemitism around the Occupy movement is a clear example of why we need to ensure that our own politics reflect the circumstances of the present.

The following is a selection of articles that throw light on this; the first stage is to acknowledge what antisemitism is and that it is around us now, and not just on the extreme right. This is followed by some existing anarchist perspectives on the Israeli-Palestine Conflict, the dominant narrative of the moment, which is unleashing much anti-Jewish and anti-Islamic racism and forms the background to much of the discourse in the west.

I then attempt to bring these threads together using an anarchist approach that incorporates anti-racism theory and a critique of liberal politics within the context of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. This is followed by some examples of some positions of solidarity with Palestinians which make a concerted effort to avoid the pitfalls of antisemitism.

To complement this is Mina Grauer's exploration of Jewish nationalism within 19th Century anarchist circles and a pre-WWII letter of Emma Goldman, also addressing the issue of Zionism.

If you want to read more, there are a number of resources listed at the end. There many articles we wanted to put in, but did not have the space. However, two stand out, the late Steve Cohen's book *Funny, you don't look Anti-Semitic*, and the pamphlet *We are all Anarchists against the Wall!*

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¹ We use antisemitism rather than anti-Semitism, to reflect that this is not about being against Semites, a contested issue in itself, but refer to the historical racism directed against Jews which is often done using abstract concepts.

² See, for example, *Make a foreshortened critique of capitalism history*, TOP Berlin, Shift Magazine, Issue 1; and the *Reply* by The Wine and Cheese Appreciation Society of Greater London, Issue 4: <http://shiftmag.co.uk/?p=73> & <http://shiftmag.co.uk/?p=135>